

BRIEFS

MESSENGERS SELECT MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

DALLAS (BP) — Messengers to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) 2018 annual meeting June 12-13 in Dallas elected the 68-member Committee on Nominations for 2018-2019 to represent the 34 states or territories qualified for representation under SBC Bylaw 30. The committee, with at least one layperson from each qualified state or territory, will make nominations to messengers attending the June 2019 SBC annual meeting in Birmingham, for trustee service on boards and committees. Mississippi Baptists elected to the committee were Scott Thomas II, pastor of First Church, Lake; and Art Stevens, member of First Church, Jackson.

ASSOCIATION DIRECTORS APPROVE NAME CHANGE

DALLAS (BP) — "Associational Mission Strategist" is the new recommended title for Southern Baptist mission leaders formerly called directors of missions, or DOMs. The new title was unanimously approved by nearly 250 members attending the 2018 Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL) June 10-11 in Dallas, though its recommendations are not binding for the more than 1,100 autonomous associations in Southern Baptist life.

**NO BAPTIST RECORD
EDITION NEXT WEEK**

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, the news journal is not published on the weeks that include the Independence Day holiday and the observance of Christmas Day. Thus, there will be no issue of The Baptist Record next week. The next issue will be dated July 12. The deadline for submitting news items for that issue is July 5. The advertising deadline has passed. The staff of The Baptist Record would like to thank the loyal readers for their support of Mississippi Baptists' ministry of information, and wish everyone a Happy Fourth.



ANOTHER CHURCH LOST — On Jan. 9 of this year, Chinese authorities brought down The Golden Lampstand, an evangelical Christian church in the city of Linfen in Shanxi province. The Golden Lampstand, home to a reported 50,000 members, was destroyed two days after the last Roman Catholic church in the city was demolished. Government officials alleged The Golden Lampstand did not have the proper paperwork in place. All churches in China must be government-approved or face destruction. (Photo courtesy of China Aid)

Religious restrictions rise

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Religious restrictions continue to spread globally as reflected in the Pew Research Center's ninth annual study of anti-religion laws and social hostilities in 198 countries.

Forty-two percent of the countries in the survey ranked high or very high on Pew's scale of restrictions, up from 40% in 2015 and 29% in the baseline study period of 2007, Pew reported.

"Since some of these countries are among the world's most populous (such as China and

India), this means that a large share of the world's population in 2016 — 83% — lived in countries with high or very high religious restrictions," Pew said, as compared to 79% of the world's population living in those countries in 2015.

However, the study pointed out that with religious minorities bearing the brunt of the restrictions and harassment, "the actual proportion of the world's population that is affected by high levels of religious restrictions may be considerably lower than 85%."

In spite of the rankings and variables, religiously-motivated harassment and restrictions of varying amounts were reported in 187 of the countries studied. That finding is up from 169 countries in 2015, and indicates the most widespread harassment since 2007.

Rankings are based on a composite of government restrictions including laws, policies, and actions by officials, which increased, and hostilities

see RESTRICTIONS on p. 5

Rainer: SBC must change course to survive

DALLAS (BP and local reports) — Is the Southern Bap-

tist Convention (SBC) dying? Attendees at the LifeWay Christian Resources breakfast during the SBC annual meeting in Dallas a couple of weeks ago may have been surprised to hear LifeWay President Thom S. Rainer say, "Yes."

"Right now, the SBC is on a trajectory of decline and slow death," Rainer told a packed room of 1,100 people. He cited the recent Annual Church Profile that showed a decline in membership for the 11th consecutive year and a drop in baptisms for eight of the last 10 years.



RAINER

Things have to change, Rainer said, noting that Southern Baptists can maintain their theology while adapting their methodology.

"LifeWay people hear me say three words more than any others: Change or die," Rainer said. "We keep God's Word as our unchanging foundation but we must change how we do things."

Rainer maintained that "ministry is harder now than it used to be." In the past, he said, churches could grow by drawing in nominal Christians as there was still a cultural benefit to church attendance.

"That is no longer the case," he said.

Many churches rightly jet-
tisoned a programmatic ap-

proach to evangelism but failed to replace it with anything else, Rainer asserted. "Instead of reaching out, they became inward-focused."

Yet Rainer was optimistic about the future as he spoke at the breakfast with Jonathan Howe, director of strategic initiatives at LifeWay and co-host of the Rainer on Leadership podcast.

Rainer noted the importance of personal evangelism in seeing a denominational renewal, including among pastors and church leaders.

"The way to turn things around is if every member of every church will answer the call of the Great Commission and say, 'Here am I. Send me,'" he said.

¹ see RAINER on p. 6

SBC search chairman: Speculation unfounded

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — The search committee charged with nominating the next president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville “has not begun to look at names yet,” and “any speculation or social media posts about who we may nominate is just that, speculation.”

That's according to an update released June 20 addressed to SBC Executive Committee members and provided to Baptist Press by search committee chairman Steve Swofford, pastor of First Church in Rockwall, Texas.



man Steve Swofford, pastor of First Church in Rockwall, Texas.

The search committee is working to find a replacement for Frank S. Page, who resigned March 27 after citing a "personal failure." Prior to that, Page served as interim pastor of First Church, Jackson.

Swofford also told Executive Committee members in the update, "When we are prepared to offer a name for

see SEARCH on p. 7

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AUG 03 2018



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

An exciting opportunity

Politics as blood sport probably arrived on these shores with the Mayflower, meaning we've been on a war footing in the political arenas of life since the beginning of continental settlement. Politics is a perpetual rough and tumble enterprise driven by the old axiom, "You can't govern if you don't win, meaning a candidate has no choice but to stoop to whatever it takes to get elected."

Huey P. Long, the immortal populist politician from our neighbor state of Louisiana, once said, "I don't care whether they're talkin' fer me or agin' me, long as they're talkin' 'bout me." Practicing that creed earned Long the nickname Kingfish of Louisiana politics for a quite a while.

We're certainly seen our share of scorched earth politics in our own state, and not just in the present generation. One of Mississippi's cruder political characters of yesteryear is anecdotally reputed to have said of his opponent during a hotly-contested race, "This man is a known thespian." Observers of this state's history believe that tight election may well have been tipped toward the accuser because of his deceitful but effective manipulation of voters.

"Politics is Hollywood for ugly people," a pundit wrote after getting a belly full of the political preening and puffery associated with so many American officeholders.

It's not just electioneering for government office, though, that sours us on politics. Politics infects civic clubs, non-profit organizations, and even the old men's coffee clubs that meet mid-morning around town.

We've seen our share of it in the Southern Baptist Convention and Mississippi Baptist Convention, not to mention tearing at the heart of many local churches.

However, present political profaneness seems to top everything that has come before. Take actor Peter Fonda of the famous Fonda family of performers, for example. So angry is Fonda, a Democrat activist, at current U.S. President Donald Trump, a Republican, that he said last week he would like to see the President's 12-year-old son thrown into a cage of pedophiles.

California Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a Democrat, applauded

the owner of the northern Virginia restaurant who threw out Trump press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, and her family last week.

Waters, who doesn't reside in the congressional district she represents, went on to call for activists to accost members of the Trump administration wherever they are discovered in public. "If you see anybody from that Cabinet in a restaurant, in a department store, at a gasoline station, you get out and you create a crowd and you push back on them," she was widely quoted as demanding in a rally speech last weekend.

The President himself is not without some responsibility for this mess. During a 2016 campaign rally on his way to winning the White House, an irritated Trump offered to pay the legal bills for anyone who would punch a particularly persistent heckler in the face. (Someone did.)

The stories of incivility, threatening epithets, and outright assault over political issues could fill volumes — with a lot more to catalogue in coming days. More moderate observers have begun to worry that the increasingly bad tenor of such behavior is going to dredge up racial and other social evils of the past and lead to more serious and injurious outcomes, up to and including deaths.

Now is the time for followers of Jesus to step in with a display of Christian demeanor. Because the Son of God powerfully changed us when we arose from the baptismal waters to be born again, we should not — must not — engage in mistreatment of others at any level.

When lost, angry people see the river of love that pours from a Christian's soul toward them, they're naturally going to want to know what we possess that makes us that way. There's our opening to explain why we are who we are. There's our opportunity to lead them to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

Don't be discouraged by the present unrest. Be excited. Be excited, not for the manifold pain being inflicted on people right now, but for the chances that are arising all around us to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20).

When we acknowledged Christ, we voluntarily took on that responsibility. Let's get busy.

The Modern Prodigals

While doing some spring cleaning, I discovered in the bottom of a drawer a church pictorial directory which was about six years old. Glancing through it, I noticed that many once-active families had dropped out and no longer attended.

I began to wonder what would cause such a spiritual decline. The term "backsliding" came to mind, meaning a return to an old bad habit. Regular church members who once joyously sang Onward Christian Soldiers now won't even march to Sunday School or church once a week.

How can a person claim to be faithful to God but not be faithful in church attendance? In Colossians 1:18, we read that since Jesus is the head of the church and gave himself for the church, then certainly we, as Christians, ought to give ourselves to the church.

The average person who does not attend church does not care to take the time away from other pursuits. The cost of disciplined and regular church attendance weighs heavily against worldly pleasures. Making excuses becomes much easier than making an effort.

Perhaps they are feeling Sunday morning fatigue from a tough work week and decide to sleep in, or realize a great opportunity to book a tee time at the local golf course. Maybe they are camping out at the lake because someone informed them the fish were really biting that weekend.

We are reminded of the parable Jesus told of the man who gave a great feast and sent out many invitations. Everyone was too busy to take time out for a feast and began to make excuses one after another. It seems that business and pleasure came before having to go out of their way to accommodate the man's request.

Upon fulfilling their pleasures, poor church attenders will then turn to procrastination. They say they may get back to an active church attendance someday. "Someday" is exactly what Satan wants to hear. People who have good intentions but always procrastinate are his desired subjects.

Some church members lose heart toward the church. They become disenchanted and disagree with the vision of the membership and begin to think they are intruding and not wanted. The



Guest opinion
with Charles Hendrix

disagreement continues to gnaw away like cancer until finally they stop attending church altogether and walk away.

The sixth chapter of John reveals that Jesus was preaching to the crowds when they began to murmur among themselves and walk away. Jesus turned to his disciples and asked: "Will you also leave me?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go?"

The question Peter answered two thousand years ago is still relevant today to the modern prodigals of church attendance: To whom will they go?

The parable of the prodigal son tells us about the son who left his father for what he thought were good times and a happier lifestyle. When he was awakened to the truth, he returned and was welcomed home with open arms by his father. So it is with the Christian church and its fellowship.

If anyone is acquainted with a once-active member who fits the mold of a backsliding prodigal who seems to be wandering aimlessly, please invite them back and welcome them home. Don't wait until it's too late! We can see in our newspapers and on TV that Satan is very active in our world today. What a great time to minister to these prodigal Christians.

The epistle of James instructs us: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his ways will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20 NKJV).

A Vicksburg native, Hendrix is a member of First Church, Fannin, and is retired from The Rankin County News. He may be contacted at chendrix515@gmail.com. Edited for style.

THE BAPTIST RECORD

Editor
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbcb.org

Associate Editor
Tony Martin
tmartin@mbcb.org

Layout/Design
Megan Young
myoung@mbcb.org

Advertising
Dana Richardson
drichardson@mbcb.org

Circulation Manager
DeAnna Burgess
dburgess@mbcb.org

Baptist Record Advisory Committee:
Whit Lewis, New Albany
Derrick Wilson, Kosciusko
Carolyn Reeves, Oxford
Garland Boyd, Brookhaven
Lucy Stringer, Foxworth
Don Lucks, Bay Springs

Postmaster:
Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and address changes to: The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
Fax: (601) 292-3330
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

BAPTISTS

VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 26 • ISSN-0005-5778
Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$11.99 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

SBC Exec. Comm. disfellowships Georgia church

DALLAS (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee disfellowshipped a Georgia church for alleged "intentional discriminatory acts toward individuals based solely on the color of their skin," according to a recommendation adopted at the Executive Committee meeting June 11 in Dallas before the start of the 2018 SBC annual meeting the next day.

In disfellowshipping Raleigh White Church in Albany, Ga., the Executive Committee acted *ad interim* on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention, stating the congregation "does not presently meet the definition of a cooperating church under Article III [of the SBC Constitution] and that messengers from the church should not be seated at meetings of the Convention until such time as the church declares repentance for its actions and takes appropriate steps to restore its fellowship with the Convention."

Outgoing Executive Committee chairman Stephen Rummage told Baptist Press, "Southern Baptists are not only on record but strongly committed to standing against racism and prejudice, and if a church stands for racism and prejudice then they do not stand with us and we do not stand with them."

According to written background material provided to Executive Committee members, Raleigh White — a small congregation comprising predominantly senior adults — invited a predominantly African American congregation about three years ago to share its space but subsequently experienced

conflict with that congregation, New Seasons Church of Albany.

The conflict "reportedly came to a head in March" after two years of escalating tension, when New Seasons visitors inadvertently arrived at the shared facility during Raleigh White's homecoming service and were turned away, according to the background materials.

"A daughter of one of the visitors asked to use the restroom and reportedly was told she could use the convenience store down the road," the report stated.

The Georgia Baptist Mission Board (GBMB) and the local Mallory Association both tried unsuccessfully to mediate the conflict between Raleigh White and New Seasons, according to the background material.

Mallory Association withdrew fellowship from Raleigh White Church on April 3, and GBMB sent a letter April 9 informing the congregation it was no longer affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention.

An Executive Committee staff member contacted individuals aware of the situation at Raleigh White, the Executive Committee's administrative committee was told during the June 11 meeting. Those contacts confirmed reports about Raleigh White from the association and the GBMB.

Disfellowshipping Raleigh White "was the right decision for us to make," said Rummage, pastor of Bell Shoals Church in Brandon, Fla., but "it is always a sad decision to make when we withdraw fellowship from a church."

"Southern Baptists are not only on record but strongly committed to standing against racism and prejudice, and if a church stands for racism and prejudice then they do not stand with us and we do not stand with them."

Stephen Rummage

Outgoing Executive Committee chairman

The Barronelle Stutzman Story



Alliance Defending Freedom

Supreme Court deals another blow to homosexual demands

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The U.S. Supreme Court provided a promising directive June 25 in the ongoing effort by business owners to practice their faith convictions at work.

The justices issued an order that annulled a lower-court ruling against Richland, Wa., florist Barronelle Stutzman, 73, a Southern Baptist who declined to design flowers for a same sex wedding.

The order also instructed the Washington Supreme Court to reconsider its previous decision against Stutzman in light of U.S. Supreme Court justices' June 4 opinion in favor of a Colorado cake artist who refused to design and decorate a cake in celebration of a wedding of two men.

In that 7-2 decision, the nation's high court ruled the Colorado Civil Rights Commission violated the religious free exercise clause of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment and demonstrated in its action "religious hostility" toward Jack Phillips, owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in suburban Denver.

The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville applauded the U.S. Supreme Court's latest action on the issue.

"We're encouraged that the Supreme Court decided to give Barronelle a new day in court," said Travis Wussow, ERLC vice president of public policy and general counsel.

"Throughout the process in Washington state court, Barronelle's sincerely held religious beliefs were treated with neither respect nor dignity," Wussow told Baptist Press in written comments.

"No one should be punished by the court for his or her religious beliefs, and we look forward to

continuing to support Barronelle in her case."

Supporters and opponents of Stutzman's appeal offered vastly different views of the high court's order.

Kristen Waggoner of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) said the high court "rightly asked" Washington's Supreme Court to re-evaluate its ruling against Stutzman.

Washington Democratic Attorney General Bob Ferguson's efforts "to punish her because he dislikes her beliefs about marriage are as impermissible as Colorado's efforts to punish Jack Phillips and Masterpiece Cakeshop," Waggoner said in a June 25 telephone news conference.

The Washington court should recognize in keeping with the Masterpiece decision that "hostility toward people of faith has no place in our society," she said.

Waggoner, senior vice president of ADF's U.S. legal division, argued on behalf of Phillips and his shop before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The radically pro-LGBT Human Rights Campaign (HRC) in Washington, D.C., downplayed the effect of the order.

The U.S. Supreme Court "did not indicate there was anything wrong" with the Washington court's decision, HRC Legal Director Sarah Warbelow said in a written statement.

"[T]here is no indication that there were flaws in the application of civil rights law in [Stutzman's case]. We view this decision as encouraging news that justice will prevail" and the Washington Supreme Court will again uphold the state's laws, she predicted.

ADF, which also represents Stutzman, expects the Washington Supreme Court "to follow the law," Waggoner said. If it does

not, ADF will return to the U.S. Supreme Court for a final ruling, she stressed.

State laws and court rulings — and especially the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 legalization of same sex marriage — have brought intense pressure on Christians and other people of faith who believe marriage is only between a man and a woman.

This has been especially true in the wedding business where florists, cake designers, photographers, and others have been sued for declining to use their talents for same sex weddings.

In Stutzman's case, the Washington Supreme Court affirmed in 2017 a lower-court decision, finding the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 ruling that legalized same sex marriage means discrimination "based on same sex marriage constitutes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

Stutzman had served Robert Ingersoll, a self-avowed homosexual, for nearly 10 years and had become friends with him. She also had hired homosexual employees at her shop, Arlene's Flowers.

When Ingersoll asked her to design the flowers for his 2013 wedding to Curt Freed, Stutzman told him she could not because using her artistic ability to take part in the ceremony would violate her beliefs.

She referred him to other florists in the area who would provide flowers for the wedding but Ferguson, as well as the ACLU on behalf of Ingersoll and Freed, sued Stutzman.

Stutzman told reporters on the news conference call she is "very thankful and grateful" the high court has allowed her case to continue.

The case is *Arlene's Flowers v. Washington*.

Over the past few decades, I have been fascinated with the evolution of all the pre-wedding events. It used to be that you would hear about a couple getting engaged and people would see them and see the ring and congratulate them and wish them well, just in the normal course of life. Soon the couple would set a date and everybody would start making plans for the wedding itself. Then things took a shift and people started having engagement parties. Once they get engaged they have a party to announce that they are engaged, and now there have been some pre-engagement parties. I suppose in time we will probably have a "We're Thinking About Getting Engaged" party. I can envision we may even have a "We're Thinking About Dating" party.

All of this change in the wedding process got me to thinking about funerals, not that funerals and weddings are alike (though some may be). Funerals, too, have changed over the years. What I would like to suggest is that maybe we can start having pre-funeral fellowships. I'm not talking about a get-together just before we have the funeral, but maybe scheduling such events three to five years before passing. You will still probably be able to be up and about and enjoy the attendees and the wonderful fellowship. It will allow you to see and visit with your friends and family that would come.



A Pre-Funeral Fellowship?

Equally important, it will let you know who didn't come!

Now it looks like Google can help us. Did you see they have developed a program? You fill in the blanks and they will tell you when you will die. Truth is, only God—not Google—has that program. As a group of young medical students were told, "Don't tell a person when they're going to die, because they may just hang around to come to your funeral."

I know we don't identify special days as these pre-funeral events, but I suppose that's what family homecomings and Thanksgiving and Christmas get-togeth-

ers are, in part. At least, they are times of love and care and exchanging of our genuine care for others with the understanding that it could be the last gathering where we will all be there. Actually, the very best funeral occasion is the one that is described in the Bible as a post-funeral party.

This one is found in John 12:1-2. If you're not familiar with it, that's the chapter just after Lazarus was resurrected. John 12:1-2 says, "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had

been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." Isn't that great? They are going to have a big party because Lazarus is alive. He was dead and is alive!

The wonderful thing about that is there is a post-funeral fellowship being prepared, planned, and will be carried out for all of God's people. Revelation 20:6 says it this way, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." It's the great gathering of God's people who have come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. Everything is being prepared, made ready, and all we need to do is to know that we know Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

If you don't know Him, today is your day. You can trust Him as your Savior and welcome Him into your life. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." We may not change all these earthly funeral traditions, but we can know that what is prepared in glory is going to be a part of our lives—eternally.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **West McComb, McComb:** Summer Revival, July 8-11; Sun., 8:30 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m. Gene Douglas, speaker; Hubert Greer, music.

► **Piquin First Church, Ethel:** Homecoming and Revival, June 24-27; Sun., 11 a.m. with fellowship meal to follow, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.

► **Jerusalem Church, Kosciusko:** Revival, July 15-18; Sun., 10:30 a.m. (no Sunday

School) with covered dish to follow, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m. Finger food to follow Wed. service. Gene Richardson, speaker.

► **Moss Hill Church, Petal:** 95th Anniversary Homecoming, July 8; Sunday School, 9 a.m. with worship at 10 a.m., followed by lunch in fellowship hall; special music and sharing to follow lunch. Bill Brown, speaker. Craig Cluff, pastor.

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75 FOUNDATION FLASHBACK IS

Highlights from the history of your Mississippi Baptist Foundation, shared in the format of their original publication in *The Baptist Record*.

Total Stewardship

Christian stewardship includes the tithe, the collection plate, and all of one's time and talent; but let us remember that God is interested in the total of man and not mere segments.

God is interested in the nine-tenths as well as the tenth the Christian takes to church. He is interested in how we make it, spend it, keep it, and leave it when we die. In Luke 12:13 is the record of a man who came to Jesus and said, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." In this case the father had died and the estate was producing some problems. Unfortunately that same problem has continued through the centuries and is one repeated in practically every community. Why do Christian parents work hard to provide an estate and then leave it in such a way as to strain the relationship

of relatives? Are not Christians just as responsible to God for the way they leave their estate as they are for the way it was made, given, or used? Talk to God about the way He would have you leave your estate.

Following the appeal for assistance in the division of "the inheritance," Jesus gave the parable of the rich fool. After saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Jesus asked the question, "then whose shall those things be, which though has provided?" Is not this a question for each of us? You can answer this question properly through Christian estate planning. A Christian will is an important step to take. Since God helped you in producing the estate, He is interested in your extended stewardship of His blessings to you.

The above writeup was published in *The Baptist Record* on January 2, 1975 as part of a special feature page highlighting the ministry of the Foundation. Visit msbaptistfoundation.org, call 601-292-3210, or e-mail foundation@mbcb.org to learn more about legacy giving and stewarding your "nine-tenths."



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Foundation News • Summer 2018

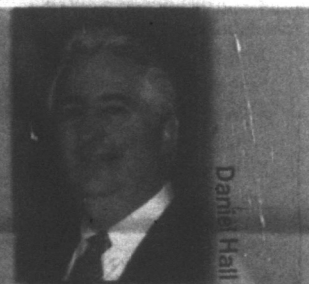
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH VICKSBURG Reaching 'over and above'

Daniel C. Hall
Executive Director, MBF

Matt Buckles has been a champion for Kingdom stewardship for a long time. As pastor of the First Baptist Church in Vicksburg for the past 14 years, Matt has continued the course of previous leaders as he encourages church members to make an investment in missions and ministry beyond their tithe. With keen foresight and great anticipation of how the Lord will use FBC to touch the world, the congregation has responded by making gifts "over and above" the ministry budget with the goal of sharing the life-changing love of Jesus in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts. To this end, several scholarship and ministry endowments have been established with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. The earnings from these funds provide financial resources for a host of FBC's local and global ministries.

Highlighting First Baptist's mission emphasis, Buckles declared "This church has a commitment to fulfill the Great Commission. We have the conviction, the vision; we have the resources."

Please receive this edition of *Foundation News* as a small window through which to view a pastor and people who are making a Kingdom impact on current and future generations through the generous stewardship of all that the Lord has entrusted to their care.



Daniel Hall

"This church has a commitment to fulfill the Great Commission. We have the conviction, the vision; we have the resources."

Buckles

In photo: Dr. Matt Buckles; First Baptist Church, Vicksburg



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Scholarships

Although several scholarship funds were in place prior to Matt's arrival at First Baptist, the number of these education funds has doubled during his tenure. Encouraged by the generosity and focus of the FBC congregation, Matt offered "We celebrate that, we highlight it, we give God glory for it, and we'll just keep adding to it."

Through a planned gift initiated in 1980, Andrew and May Jones Puckett established the "Mr. and Mrs. Hardy Jones Memorial Scholarship" in memory of May's parents. This scholarship became active in 1997 and is directed to FBC Vicksburg for distribution to either Mississippi College or William Carey University. Preference for awards are given to students who are majoring in music and are preparing for a church-related vocation.

Through a bequest outlined in his Last Will and Testament, Henry Pullen made provisions to bless students preparing for vocational ministry. When Henry was "called into higher service" with the Lord in 1988, the "Henry C. Pullen Scholarship Fund" was established with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation by FBC Vicksburg.

In August 2012, Ernest and Camille Thomas established the "George Randle Thomas Memorial Scholarship" with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation in memory of their son. As longtime



Camille and Ernest Thomas

members and supporters of FBC Vicksburg, Ernest and Camille desire to bless students whose pattern of life bears witness to Jesus Christ by reflecting Christ-like ideals. This particular scholarship has a primary focus on active members of FBC whose

academic pursuits include business administration, accounting, liberal arts, engineering, or education.

The Chaney family has a rich heritage of making Kingdom investments that are "over and above" their ongoing gifts to their church. Following the death of his wife Kathryn in January 2016, Mark established the "Mark J. Chaney Family Scholarship"

with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation in December 2016. Preference for awards from this endowment are given to active

members of First Baptist Church who are attending a Baptist college or university in Mississippi, or a Southern Baptist seminary. In June 2017, Mark established a second scholarship with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation that has a primary focus on students who are active members of the Bovina Baptist Church in Vicksburg. More recently (December 2017), Chaney established a third endowed scholarship with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation designed to encourage a missional focus among students from FBC and the Warren Baptist Association who are pursuing a degree in an agricultural-related field. In addition to these three recent scholarships, however, Mark also made an investment in the Beulah Baptist Church in Newton County with an "over and above" gift. Mark stated, "The focus is not on me but rather on the Lord who has blessed me."

Early in his ministry, Buckles understood that "a call to preach is a call to prepare." Not only from his experience of seeking and receiving training, but also from his observation of the experiences of others who sought to become equipped for ministry. Matt has seen time and time again that scholarships work. "I've seen young ministerial students who were struggling to buy books, or put gas in the car to go to class, or meet some family needs, be blessed by Baptists who cared."

Buckles's first encounter with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation involved the establishment of a scholarship fund and occurred many years before his ministry at First Baptist Church in Vicksburg. While serving at Sylwarena Baptist Church, Matt received a call from a church member who expressed her desire to establish a scholarship through the MBF.



Mark Chaney

"A call to preach is a call to prepare." ... I've seen young ministerial students who were struggling to buy books, or put gas in the car to go to class, or meet some family needs, be blessed by Baptists who cared."

Buckles

In addition, she wanted him to set up a meeting with a Foundation representative. Years later, Matt reflected on what transpired during that visit by saying, "As I sat in her den and watched the conversation (and) listened to what was going on, I realized up-close and personal that this is how the Mississippi Baptist Foundation works, and this is why it (MBF) is so critical to the life of the Convention and the Kingdom of God."

Recalling that experience years later, Matt realized that he had been a beneficiary of a scholarship similar to what had been established that day in Wesson between his church member and the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. He asserted, "And so it became a conviction of mine, as I had opportunity, to encourage, inform, teach, challenge, and resource church members so they can continue to do this."

Buckles shared that First Baptist has many members who not only see great value in Christian education and theological training, but who also understand the privilege and responsibility to invest the resources entrusted to them by God in Kingdom-building endeavors such as our Baptist educational institutions. He concluded, "We don't believe we've ever done enough. We need to continue to do more."

Missions and Ministry Endowments

In addition to the various scholarship endowments established with and administered by the Mississippi Baptist Foundation on behalf of First Baptist Church, the Foundation also assists FBC with several mission and ministry endowments. One of these funds is the "FBC Endowment Fund" that was established by the congregation in October 1994. The proceeds from the investment of the endowment's corpus are distributed annually by FBC for mission and ministry opportunities including World Missions (focusing on International, North American, and State Missions), Christian Higher Education, the Baptist Children's Village, and other unbudgeted ministry needs.

Since the inception of the "FBC Endowment Fund," members of the congregation have invested in their church by leaving a perpetual legacy of love and influence through this special endowment in a variety of ways such as outright gifts, charitable trusts, gifts of stocks, or as a bequest through their Last Will and Testament.

The "J.E. Blackburn, Sr. and Thelma Blackburn Memorial Endowment Fund" was established through the Mississippi Baptist Foundation in January 2016 by members of the Blackburn family. Specifically designed to support the missions and ministry efforts of First Baptist Church, the earnings from the investment of the corpus of the fund

Thelma Blackburn



OVER&ABOVE
«FBC VICKSBURG»



are distributed by the Foundation to FBC for the benefit of local and global mission efforts.

Debra and Tom Isaac are active members at First Baptist Church of Vicksburg, Mississippi where the couple teach Sunday School and assist

with local mission endeavors. Debra grew up at First Baptist Church with her family during the 1960's and 70's. After finishing her education at Mississippi State, Debra established her career in human resources. Debra and Tom returned to Vicksburg in 2001 to join the family business.

Through their desire to help others, Debra and Tom established the "Debra and Tom Isaac Acts 1:8 Mission Fund" through the Mississippi Baptist Foundation in 2017. Earnings from this endowment not only will provide financial blessings for First Baptist's preschool, children, and youth ministries, but resources also will be available for future mission and ministry opportunities.

Believing that God speaks to us through His word, Debra and Tom cite 1 Chronicles 29:14 as a favorite verse: "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."

Throughout his years of ministry, Dr. Buckles has observed that "there are Baptists in the pew who have dollars and they want to do more beyond their tithe and the local church." He testified further, "It is very rewarding to our congregation to know that we have these dollars invested with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation...and (we) receive a lot of dollars to put back in God's Kingdom work (both) local and global."



Debra and Tom Isaac

New Church Starts

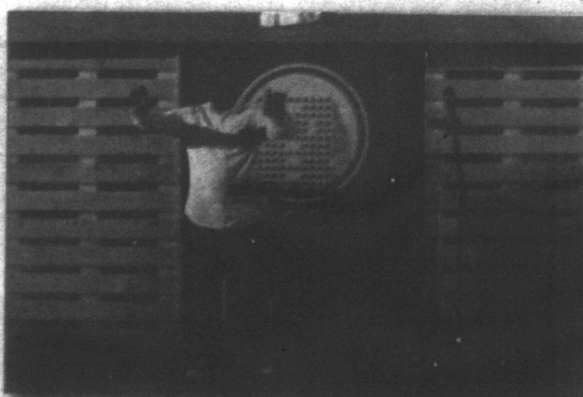
In February 2013, First Baptist Church established the "New Church Start Fund" with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. The purpose of this endowment is to provide funding for the establishment and support of new churches with whom FBC will be a mission partner. With resources from the New Church Start Fund, FBC Vicksburg has provided financial assistance to churches in Vancouver, BC, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, LA, and in their hometown of Vicksburg.

According to Matt, "Our First Baptist Church Missions Council, up until 2012, would try to find a penny, nickel, a dime, a dollar, here or there to fund our local and global missions efforts." During that time, a church member posited "wouldn't it be nice" if the church could invest a sum of money, such as \$25,000, with the resultant earnings designated to underwrite the Missions Council's efforts to provide supplemental financial blessings for new churches. Buckles continued, "Later, a farmer in our church came to see me in the late part of the year after the farming was over. They said, 'we've had a good year financially. We would like to give the church some extra money.' Over and above. So they handed me the envelope, I opened it up and found a check for \$25,000." This generous couple expressed their desire to be part of creating the New Church Start Fund in order to help fuel First Baptist's missional efforts.

Today, the FBC Vicksburg New Church Start Fund has grown to over \$150,000. Whereas in earlier years, the Missions Council would have to search for \$50 to \$250 for various projects aimed at strengthening new churches, FBC now receives checks for thousands of dollars to bless young churches from this special endowment managed by the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. Buckles has observed a ripple effect among the congregation as members become aware of what can be done through this type of giving.

Investing for Your Church

Matt Buckles acknowledged that the decision made by FBC Vicksburg to utilize the resources of the Mississippi Baptist to manage funds on behalf of the church "just makes sense," not only because of the Foundation's expertise, but also because of their shared motivation and purpose that extends "from the pew to the pulpit to the foreign mission field." Buckles further affirmed, "they are equipped to do this. ... An individual Mississippi Baptist



Pastor Brian Crawford, of City Light Church in Vicksburg, preaches at a service of the young church. City Light is one of the new church starts First Baptist Vicksburg has been able to encourage and support with funds provided through endowed gifts.

pastor or staff member or deacon or Sunday School teacher or lay leader or member of the church doesn't have to dig into all of this. We have an agency that handles this for us. We just have the conviction to give the monies that God wants us to give, and let [the Foundation] help us do all the hard work."

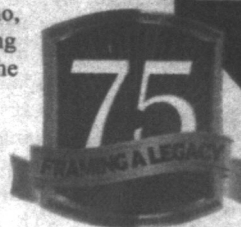
Many other Mississippi Baptists have invested in their church through the Mississippi Baptist Foundation in a manner similar to members and friends of First Baptist Church, Vicksburg. In addition, many other churches utilize the money-management services of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. To this end, the Foundation administers mission funds, scholarship funds, building funds, cemetery funds, capital

improvement funds, contingency funds, and funds for a host of other special purposes such as church playgrounds, libraries, and age-group ministries.

Since his first introduction to the Foundation, Matt indicated that he has learned that, "There's a difference in secular investing and spiritual investing. The Mississippi Baptist Foundation's great work is: from a spiritual standpoint...from a Kingdom standpoint, they 'get it.'" Therefore, "we don't have to spend time telling them what a Sunday School is, or what an International Mission Board or North American Mission Board is or the importance of a cemetery fund...(because) they're spiritual investors...and we don't hesitate to join them in what they are doing for Mississippi Baptists and...God's work in the world."

Located near the banks of the Mississippi River, First Baptist Church of Vicksburg, Mississippi has been a beacon of help and hope for over 175 years. Under Matt's leadership, this congregation has demonstrated a continuing and growing Kingdom influence by practicing individual and corporate stewardship. Since 1943, the Mississippi Baptist Foundation has ministered alongside of hundreds of churches who, like FBC Vicksburg, are helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

The psalmist declared, "...that the generation to come might know...even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children" (Psalm 78:6). As "laborers together with God," your friends at the Mississippi Baptist Foundation look forward to helping you and your church reach "over and above" in order to make Christ known to all generations.



"...that the generation to come might know...even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children" Psalm 78:6

RESTRICTIONS

cont. from p. 1

perpetrated by organizations and social groups, which remained stable.

In its study, Pew devised a 10-point scale based on several indicators and divided the

countries into five regions: the Americas, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Middle-East/North Africa.

Christians were most likely to face governmental and social harassment in the Asia-Pacific region, Pew said. Governments in 30% of the countries harassed

Christians, and social groups in 27% of the countries had done so.

Across the globe, Christians were harassed in 144 countries, up from 128 countries in 2015.

In Uzbekistan, for example, authorities raided the private homes of Protestant Christians, seized religious literature, and imposed fines. Pew cited in its report, "and in Nepal, local communities in the Kathmandu Valley opposed burials by perceived 'outsiders,' making it difficult for Protestant churches to access land they had bought years earlier."

Muslims were most likely to face harassment by both governments and social groups in Europe, where governmental harassment was found in 28% of the countries and social harassment in 36%.

Globally, Muslims were harassed in 142 countries in 2016,

up from 125 the previous year.

Jews, who comprise 0.2% of the world's population, faced harassment in 87 countries. Those incidents were most often perpetrated by individuals rather than the government, the study found.

Egypt, Russia, India, Indonesia, and Turkey had the highest levels of both government restrictions and social hostilities in 2016, among the world's most populous countries. In government restrictions alone, China ranked highest with India highest in social hostilities.

The Pew study reported that when considering government restrictions alone, 55 countries comprising 28% of those studied ranked high and very high on the scale, compared to 50 countries or 25% in 2015.

When considering societal harassment, the 54 countries

that ranked high or very high on the scale in 2016 were virtually unchanged from the 53 countries ranking high or very high the previous year. That category remained stable at 27%.

Ranking highest in government restrictions in addition to China, Russia, Egypt, and Turkey were: Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Turkmenistan, Syria, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Eritrea, Morocco, Brunei, Singapore, Western Sahara, Azerbaijan, Lao, Burma, Iraq, and Mauritania.

Ranking highest in societal harassment in addition to India, Russia, and Egypt were Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Palestinian territories, Israel, and Bangladesh.

Government restrictions included efforts to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversion, limit preaching, or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups.

Social hostilities included religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, and harassment over religion-based attire.

According to its web site, "Pew Research Center is a non-partisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research. Pew Research Center does not take policy positions. It is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts."

Researchers studied more than a dozen sources of public information, including reports from the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, various European groups, the United Nations, and many independent non-governmental organizations.

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Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

BIBLIOPHER

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QCBQB E RY, PCBOB KB YRK GB RN XU.

AUCL MUHOPBBL: PCOB

Clue: $T = G$

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Matthew 25:34

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Valued • 2 Samuel 9:1-13

The text for today's lesson begins with a somewhat unusual question from King David, "Is there anyone remaining from the family of Saul I can show kindness to for Jonathan's sake?" 2 Samuel 9:1 (CSB). This is an unusual question because of David's motive. He said he wanted to show kindness to the heir of the dynasty he had overthrown to establish his own dynasty. A dynasty he wanted to become eternal, without end. If we did not have the whole story we might have suspected David was treacherously seeking any surviving heirs to eliminate them. We need to look at the Biblical record to understand the sincerity of King David's intent to "show kindness for Jonathan's sake."

One of greatest stories in all of history is about the wholesome committed friendship between David and Jonathan. We know about this friendship from the inspired Biblical record. To understand the uniqueness of this friendship, we need to remember that Jonathan is the heir apparent to King Saul's throne, and not insignificantly King Saul's choice for his successor. David had already been anointed by God's chosen Prophet, Samuel, to succeed Saul on Israel's throne. (The story of Samuel anointing the young man, David, as the next king is found in 1 Samuel 15.)

David, at the king's command, stayed with king and did not return home to his father's house. In this setting David and Jonathan became steadfast friends. "Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the (outer Royal) robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt," 1 Samuel 18:3-4 (HCSB).

The covenant between David and Jonathan not only included them individually but also promised loving care for their descendants. 1 Samuel 20:42 (HCSB) says it this way: "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" The scene is, David and Jonathan are being forced to separate. It is a very emotional time: "After the boy had gone, David got up from the South side of the stone, and bowed

down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most," 1 Samuel 20:41 (HCSB).

David made a very committed effort to keep this promised made to his friend, Jonathan, years later. He had to be persistent because he did not know if any descendants of King Saul or Jonathan had survived the intervening wars and battles. They found a servant of Saul's

family was still living and he knew of a sole survivor from the family, Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. The servants name was Ziba and he had apparently been a trusted high ranking servant in Saul's court because he had multiple wives, 15 sons, and 20 servants of his own.

Ziba told King David that Jonathan's son was in Lo-debar at the house of Machir. Lo-debar was a non-Israelite town east of the Sea of Galilee. It was a town as far from David's reach as possible. Mephibosheth was

crippled in both feet because of a childhood injury. "So King David had him brought from the house of Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar," 2 Samuel 9:5 (CSB). When Mephibosheth met David, he showed great homage by falling on his face.

David told Mephibosheth: "I am your servant, ... 'Don't be afraid,' ... 'since I intend to show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all of your grandfather Saul's fields, and you will always eat meals at my table,'" 2 Samuel 9:6-7 (CSB). Eating all your meals at the King's table was a high honor and in this case it provided care for Mephibosheth since he was greatly handicapped.

Living at the king's palace and eating at his table did provide a couple of challenges for Mephibosheth. But King David readily provided for those too. Mephibosheth had a young son, Mica, who needs to be cared for and the fields that King David restored to him also needed to be cared for. So the King made Ziba and all his household servants to Mephibosheth and they were assigned to manage Saul's fields and care for Mica.

Hicks is associational missions director for Jasper Association in Bay Springs.



Explore the Bible

with Don Hicks

What Should We Do Now? • Acts 2:37-47

As Zechariah prophesied, Luke 1:68-79, Jesus came and redeemed us from defeat and fear and sin. Thus, this week's question: What should we do now?

On the Day of Pentecost, the Believers witnessed an awesome display of God's power as He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell each Believer (Acts 2:1-13). Believers and nonbelievers were amazed and confused. Affirming that the people had just witnessed the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, Peter stood to speak. Peter used the passage from Joel and the writings of David to explain the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14-36). "Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said... 'Brothers, what should we do?'" Acts 2:37 (NLT)

Acts 2:37-41. Lead others to faith and growth in Christ.

Peter responded by calling them to repentance and Believer's baptism. Peter had declared that Jesus was the Lord and Messiah that Joel and David had spoken of (Joel 2:28-32; Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 110:1) Peter told his listeners that they had crucified the Lord Jesus. This declaration motivated his listeners to action. 3,000 believed and were baptized. Acts 2:38-41

Acts 2:42-45. Support and help fellow believers.

The Believers immediately began to form a community—a missional community. They "...devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..." Acts 2:42 (NLT). When a person becomes a born-again Believer, there is a hunger for the Word of God.

The Believers "...devoted themselves to... fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper)..." Acts 2:42 (NLT). When I was a child, I loved to go to church; and after I accepted Jesus (age 7), there was an even greater desire to be with other Christians. The Holy Spirit places a need within all Believers for Christian fellowship. The writer of Hebrews cautions us to continue meeting together so that we can encourage one another. He also instructs us to "...motivate one another to acts of love and good works." Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT). When we cease to fellowship with other Believers, our family, we lose connection. The result is often dissension and negative attitudes. At the very least, we are unable to encourage others and receive encouragement.

The "Believers devoted themselves... to prayer." Acts 2:42 (NLT). Many great men and women who worked many hours each day attested to the fact that they were "too busy not to pray." Jesus modeled prayer, often taking time to be alone with the Father. On more than one occasion, Jesus taught us how to pray. (Matthew 6:5-18; 7:7-11; Luke 18:1-14). The Apostle Paul said that Believers are to be

in a constant attitude of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). A pastor once told me that Satan would rather see you read your Bible for 24 hours

each day than to see you spend one hour in prayer. Prayer is the power of the Believer.

The new community of faith "...shared everything they had." Acts 2:44 (NLT). They were even willing to sell their possessions so that others' needs would be met. Becoming a Christian, often meant the loss of employment, family, and imprisonment. In the United States, we are not usually persecuted for becoming Christians, but many in our churches and

communities have needs. Attitude is everything. A Christlike attitude demands that I meet needs of others as I am led by the Holy Spirit, especially other Believers (Galatians 6:10). Jesus makes it very clear that we will be judged according to our attitudes toward the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the imprisoned. (Matthew 25:31-46). If I am to be like my Savior, I must allow myself to be moved with compassion by the needs of fellow Believers.

Acts 2:46-47. Live lives that honor God and point to Christ.

The new Believers worshiped together each day! At the Temple, in their homes, "with joy and generosity—all the while praising God... And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." Acts 2:46-47. EACH DAY! What a revival that would be! To see souls saved and lives changed—DAILY!

Can you and I hope to see that kind of revival and fellowship? YES! But there's a price. We must be willing to lead others to Christ. We must be willing to support and help fellow Believers. We must be willing to live lives that honor God and point to Christ. We must worship, and share, and pray "with joy and generosity." Acts 2:46 (NLT).

Bannister is a member of Woodville Church, Woodville.



Bible Studies for Life

with Lisa Bannister

RAINER

cont. from p. 1

Rainer shared how he was called to pastor a rural church with only seven members that hadn't baptized anyone in 25 years. "After spending weeks railing at these people for not

doing anything to reach others, God challenged me: 'What are you doing personally?'"

Rainer made personal evangelism a priority and started to see new people come to Christ who then reached more new people. "This church of seven people grew to a church of 70

because we started to reach those around us."

It's rural and neighborhood churches that Rainer believes will give the first signs of whether the SBC will see a turnaround. "If we see a revived interest in evangelism and discipleship there, we will

not only see a revived denomination, we will see revival in our country."

That comes from churches reaching their local communities, he stressed. "Your church's address is not an accident. God placed you there for a reason."

Rainer repeatedly stressed the importance of the local church throughout his presentation and in answering questions at the end.

"Change in the SBC will not come from the denomination down—it will start with the churches," he said.

Accountable • 2 Samuel 12:1-14

A man who often advocated for the poor and powerless approached a high ranking judicial officer to address a grievance. This is an account of the event that took place in a country that is a great distance from our homeland of America. The era in time for this account is many centuries ago.

The advocate told the judicial officer about a tragic story. The story had two major characters. One of the characters was a wealthy and powerful man. He was a man of great wealth including large herds of cattle and great flocks of sheep and goats. Since he was a well known man with a reputation to defend, he would graciously even extravagantly entertain travelers and new comers so they could be impressed with both his wealth and generosity.

The other man in this account was very poor, powerless, and basically an unknown peasant. The only flock he had was one young ewe lamb. It was all he could do to figure out how to feed his loveable ewe. This ewe lamb basically became a much loved pet, actually an important part of the family. As with little dogs and kittens of our day this pet lamb lived in the house with the man's children and family.

The lamb would sleep in the man's arms. As with any much loved pet, the lamb drank from the man's own cup and eat the

same food as the rest of the family. She was just another member of the family, just like a daughter. Of course, the family hoped this lamb that they worked so hard to buy could provide more lambs and improve the family's meager resources. It would be very much an understatement to say the children of this family dearly loved their pet lamb.

Then tragedy suddenly struck these poor children and their family. The wealthy but selfish rich man already identified by his great wealth and power acted cruelly. Wanting to impress an important guest who was traveling in the area, he stole the little ewe lamb and had his servants butcher it and prepare it to feed his guest. While he wanted to impress the traveler, he didn't want to lose any of the sheep from his large flock.

The judicial official's sense of justice and compassion for the poor was greatly aggravated. With righteous indignation, the judge shouted that the scoundrel should

die for this outrageous injustice. Realizing his first reaction was too strong; the judge announced the actual verdict was that the rich man must pay for the lamb with four lambs.

The advocate for the powerless was Nathan, the prophet. The judicial official was

David, King of Israel, who was the supreme appeals judge. In a brave act Nathan confronted David: "You are the man!" 2 Samuel 12:7 (CSB).

David responded in open and contrite repentance. "David responded to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.'"

"Then Nathan replied to David, 'And the LORD has taken away your sin; you will not die,' 2 Samuel 12:13 (CSB).

David understands that his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, was a sin against God. All sin is a rebellion against God. In the 51st Psalm where David wrote about his need for forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba,

he makes an even stronger statement. "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge," Psalm 51:3-4 (NIV).

Because of David's understanding that his sin was against God he began his psalm saying, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;" Psalm 51:1a (NIV). Is there sin in your life for which you need to ask God, "Have mercy on me?" On the authority of God's word in Romans, I can promise you "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," Romans 10:13 (NIV). In this verse "the name of the Lord" is Jesus Christ.

If you feel you would understand David's cry for forgiveness better by knowing more about his sin against God with Bathsheba then read the eleventh chapter of 2 Samuel. 2 Samuel 11:27b (NIV) summarizes the essence of this chapter with regard to the need for forgiveness: "But the thing David had done displeased the LORD."

Hicks is associational missions director for Jasper Association in Bay Springs.



Explore the Bible
with Don Hicks

What Happens Next? • Revelation 21:1-8

In this unit, Why Are We Here?, we have studied man's being created in the image of God and placed on earth to live in fellowship with Him; man ruining a perfect relationship with God by choosing to sin; man receiving God's Law and being unable to practice the Law in an effort to restore relationship; God sending His only Son to restore man's fellowship with God and establish a new covenant in man's heart, whereby, man might live and serve God and others. What Happens Next? What does God plan for the future? Is there an end to the cycle of birth, sin, and death?

While the Apostle John was exiled on the Island of Patmos, God blessed John with the opportunity to see Heaven. The Book of Revelation was written during a time of great persecution and "suffering." Revelation 1:9 (NIV) No doubt, John's letter encouraged Believers to continue to live out their salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the early Christians, present day Believers should be encouraged by John's revelations of Heaven and Victory.

Revelation 21:1-3. We will live in God's presence.

John begins this chapter with, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... I heard a shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among

his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them." Revelation 21:1-3 (NLT) Since the Garden of Eden, man has been banished from the physical presence of God. We are saved through belief in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10); we communicate with God through prayer (Hebrews 4:16); Jesus prays for us (Hebrews 7:24-25). Here in Revelation John reports that God will dwell among His people. His people include those of us who have been born-again and await either His return or death to usher us into His presence.

Revelation 21:4-5. We will live in a perfect place.

The Apostle writes God's own Words: "And the One sitting on the throne said 'Look, I am making everything new!'" Revelation 21:5 (NLT) In verse 4, John proclaims, "...and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." Forever is a very long time. That's why the new

birth is called eternal. Believers will live in a perfect place, in the presence of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Life is often filled with trials and disappointments, tragedies and disasters, sadness and loneliness. We live in a fallen world where the Presence of God is known through His people, but He does not physically make His home here. The kind of Messiah that was expected by the Jews will exist in the new heaven and earth; He will sit on a physical throne and rule His people. John writes

that in Heaven there is no need for light such as the sun and the moon "...for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light." Revelation 21:23 (NLT) There is no temple "...for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." We will live in the presence of God in a perfect place.

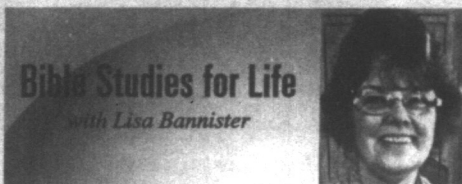
Revelation 21:6-8. Our eternity is based on our relationship with Christ.

"When Jesus had tasted it, He said, 'It is finished!' Then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." John 19:30 (NLT) In Revelation 21:6-7, John records God's Words, "...It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega - the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children." What was finished? In both instances, the plan of salvation was complete. Jesus death and resurrection completed God's plan to redeem man. Who will live in this perfect place in the presence of the Living God and the Lord Jesus Christ? "All who are victorious..." verse 7

Victory for Believers came when Jesus defeated sin and death on the cross. Victory and access to the New Heaven and the New Earth comes when we seek forgiveness of our sins, and accept that Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection were the redeeming work of God for His Creation.

What happens next? Believers, God's children, will live in God's presence, in a perfect place, based on their relationship with Christ.

Bannister is a member of Woodville Church, Woodville.



Bible Studies for Life
with Lisa Bannister

SEARCH

cont. from p. 1

consideration, we will do our reporting first and foremost with you, the full Executive Committee. Once we inform you that we are prepared to offer a name (as per our EC bylaws), we will re-

lease a statement through Baptist Press that will outline the information we first shared with you. We will not be releasing anything via social media."

Among search committee work accomplished so far as outlined by Swofford in the update are:

■ Elections of Adron Robinson of Illinois as vice chairman

and Carol Yarber of Texas as secretary.

■ Review of the process used to elect the previous two Executive Committee presidents and the processes being used by other SBC entities in their current search processes.

■ Review of input received from "[Executive Committee]

members, state executives, and [Southern Baptist Convention] entity heads."

The seven-member committee - which also includes Joe Knott of North Carolina, Stephen Rummage of Florida, Rolland Slade of California, and Mike Stone of Georgia - will receive recommendations through

June 30, Swofford wrote.

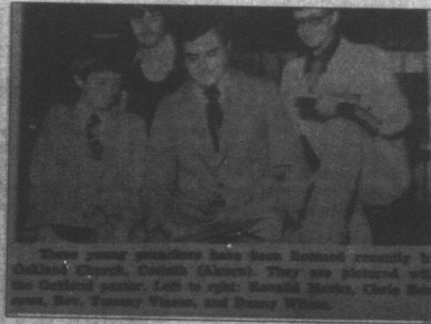
Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Church in Blackshear, Ga., joined the search committee June 11 as an ex officio member by virtue of his election as SBC Executive Committee chairman.

The full text of Swofford's update can be found at tinyurl.com/ecsearch1.

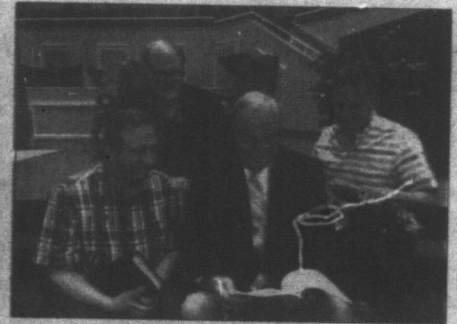
Just for the Record



BETHEL CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, held a baby dedication. Shown are Jill, Chris, and Jana Falvey; Matthew, Nicole, Abigail, and John Gazaway; and Jamie, Beth, and Beckett Wallace.



Three young preachers have been licensed recently at Oakland Church, Corinth, Alabama. They are pictured with the Oakland pastor. Left to right: Ronald Meeks, Chris Burrows, Rev. Tommy Vinson, and Danny Wilson.



In 1975, Tommy Vinson was pastor at **OAKLAND CHURCH, CORINTH**, and had the honor of licensing three young preacher "boys" in the church. A picture was submitted to The Baptist Record. On June 3, 2018, Vinson preached at the church and the four were able to recreate the picture. Shown are Ronald Meeks, Professor of Biblical Studies at Blue Mountain College; Chris Burrows, BSU Director at Itawamba Community College; Vinson, Tommy Vinson Ministries; and Dan Wilson, Professor of Biblical Studies at California Baptist University. Randy Bostick, pastor.



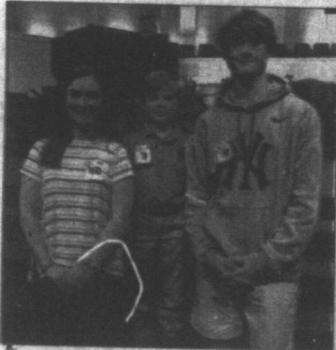
BETHSAIDA CHURCH, NESHOPA ASSOCIATION, recently held a commissioning service for Alex Bowen (third from left), a Sojourner missionary to Peru this summer. Pictured with Alex are Mendy, Anna, John, and Lee Bowen with pastor Billy James.



CROOKED CREEK CHURCH, SILVER CREEK, held a Mother's Day recognition service on May 13. Pictured from left are Nell White, oldest mother; Damien Baker, youngest mother, with baby Able; Jessie Marie Stephens, mother with the most children. Dave Caves, transitional pastor.



SEMINARY CHURCH, SEMINARY, ordained Cody Fairchild (center) to the Gospel ministry on June 10. Pictured with Fairchild are Tim Hubbard (left), senior pastor, and Colby Lambert, associate pastor for students and discipleship.



VICTORY CHURCH, HERNANDO, recently held a baby dedication. Pastor David Thomas led the dedication service.

CARROLLTON CHURCH, CARROLLTON, was represented at Bible Drill state competition by (from left) Kate-Taylor Wilson, Leighton Alderman, and Hagan Wilson. Kate-Taylor Wilson received recognition for nine years of participation, Alderman for first year participation, and Hagan Wilson for seven years participation.

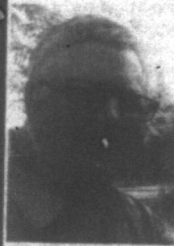
NEW ZION CHURCH, BRAXTON, recently honored Jennifer Shows (left) with a Dinner Down Under celebration to mark her upcoming summer missionary service to Australia. Brady "Outback Jack" Shorter (right) was master of ceremonies.



Mark and Darla Eubank, Brandon Church, Brandon, are shown with Carla Shelton Wyatt after speaking of their son, the late Bailey Eubank's, suicide during the dedication of **NEW BETHEL CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY'S**, new activities building. Bailey Eubank will be memorialized with a plaque in the new facility. Wyatt is VBS director for New Bethel.

Steve Keyes Comes To Mississippi for 3 Powerful Learning Opportunities For Bible Study Leaders of All Age Groups

July 28 - FBC Tupelo | August 4 - FBC Clinton
August 18 - Main Street Baptist Hattiesburg



For many years, Steve Keyes served as Pastor of Family Ministries at Southside Baptist Church in Greenville, SC. While there, he taught a large adult couples Sunday school class.

Steve has been a Walk Thru the Bible instructor since 1985. He has a passion to communicate the truth of God with excellence in order that he may bring glory to God.

Gather your teaching team and make one of these learning opportunities a priority for your Adult, Student and Children's leaders. To register go to: www.mbc.org/7laws or call 601-292-3291 to talk with Sarah Lee in the Sunday School/Small Groups Department.

Weekday leaders who attend can receive Continuing Education hours for this training.

IMPACT YOUR WORLD!